



“Value congruity” is it important for word of mouth?

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ABSTRACT

This study is among the first few attempts to examine the impact between different dimensions, namely, cognitive, affective and activation dimensions of CBE and Self Identification with value congruity as a intervening variable. This study improves to understanding of WOM communication. This research was conducted to examine the effect of value congruity influence of customer brand engagement, self identification, on word-of-mouth (WOM). This research uses purposive sampling with multiple regression and data were analyzed using SPSS. The results revealed that three dimensions of CBE had a positive impact on self-identification with value congruity as a intervening variable; self identification also had a positive impact on WOM communication. The model was tested in the context of e-service sector; future research may investigate in different context and consider to added new variable according to the existing context.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of facts that customers collect from interpersonal assets in influencing consumer decision making has been well identified in the consumer behavior and marketing literature (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). Word-of-mouth (WOM) is a form of written or oral communication between existing and potential customers (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Sijoria et al., 2019). More consumers trust this communication compared to traditional forms of communication (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Steffes and Burgee, 2009; Liang et al., 2018). Given this background, it is therefore important to understand the drivers of WOM. Based on the existing literature, this study proposes brand familiarity, customer brand engagement (CBE hereafter) and self-identification as the main drivers of WOM. In particular. The main rationale for the existing research is to develop and empirically test a conceptual model of how the various dimensions of CBE interact with self-identification and ultimately WOM. In this study, the researcher adopted the definition of CBE by Hollebeek et al. (2014, p. 154) as “consumer cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity associated with a positive valence brand during or associated with a focused consumer/brand interaction.” The dimensions of CBE are cognitive, affective and activation processes. The positive effects of cognitive

processing and CBE's affection dimensions on self-identification are in line with previous studies (Sprott et al., 2009; Leckie et al., 2016). these results display that purchasers do care approximately their self identification and the way congruent that is with the brand image of the online shopping service provider. Activation dimension of CBE did not have an impact on self-identification. One feasible rationalization is that in relation to on-line shopping, consumers may provide more choice to security, great products and speedy delivery in comparison with intangible attributes such as self-identification congruency. Activation refers to consumer's level of vigor, efforts and the time which they spend on a specific brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Results of prior studies have supported the relationship between the CBE's three dimensions (cognitive processing, affection and activation) and self-identification. According to Dhir (1987), human perception is a biased system as clients are greater liable to procedure facts based totally on their prior notion and values. This research could also consider looking at some mediating variables like Value Congruity. In the present study, activation dimension of CBE did not have a positive impact on self-identification; the reason could be whether there was any mediating variable due to which it was not significant, and this was not considered in the present study. Value Congruity refers to the match relating to the consumers' own personal values and their perceptions of brands (Lee and Jeong, 2014; Zhang and Bloemer, 2011). The self-congruity theory defines Value Congruity as a mental comparison, which customers make with respect to the dissimilarity and/or similarity of firm's values as well as their own set of values (Johar and Sirgy, 1991). Researchers have proposed Value Congruity as a key notion to maintain and develop long-standing customer relationships towards the brand/provider (Islam et al., 2017; Lee and Jeong, 2014). Values can effect significantly on consumer activities or actions, and perform as key linking factors between consumers and brands (Tuskej et al., 2013). Therefore, this research focuses on adding a mediating variable, that is Value Congruity, which is intended to examine the relationship between the Activation and Self Identification.

Customer brand engagement (CBE), The idea of engagement has gained great interest in various educational disciplines (e.g., organizational behavior and psychology), but only recently in marketing (Lam et al., 2019; Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011), and it emerged as an important area of modern marketing (Gong, 2018; Rather et al., 2018; Moliner et al., 2018; Algharabat et al., 2020). The CBE domain is at an early stage of refinement, relying on conceptual reasoning (Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Gong, 2018). Based on relationship marketing (Vivek et al., 2012), SD logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), CBE is believed to promote relational outcomes such as spreading positive WOM communication, brand loyalty, and retention through the creation of alongside customer "value" (Verhoef et al., 2010). In general, consumers are considered as active parties in exchange relationships who dedicate relevant emotional, physical, and cognitive resources to jointly create value (Higgins and Scholer, 2009). Previous studies on CBE focused on specific brands except for the researchers Sprott et al. (2009) whose research focuses on a set of brands that reflect the consumer's self-concept. Hollebeek et al. (2014) examines following a holistic perspective of the brand and includes the consumer-recognized utilitarian, hedonic, and symbolic components of the brand. Similarly, most research on CBE operationalizes assembly as multidimensional capturing the cognitive, affective and activation dimensions.

In this study, the researcher adopted the definition of CBE by Hollebeek et al. (2014, p. 154) as "cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity associated with a consumer brand that is positively valenced during or associated with focused consumer/brand interactions." The dimensions of CBE are cognitive, affective and activation processes. Cognitive processing refers to the level of dispensation and explanation of consumers' brand-related thoughts when they interact with certain brands (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Affection is defined as the consumer's degree of brand-related positive influence in a particular consumer-brand interaction (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Activation refers to the level of enthusiasm, effort and time that consumers spend on a particular brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014). The following sections discuss the proposed consequences of CBE.

In this study, we examined the relative impact of the three dimensions of CBE on self-identification. The concept of engagement has received great attention in several academic disciplines (e.g., organizational behavior and psychology), but only recently in marketing (Lam et al., 2019; Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011), and it is emerging as an important area of modern marketing (Gong, 2018; Rather et al., 2018; Moliner et al., 2018; Algharabat et al., 2020). The CBE domain is at an early stage of development, relying on conceptual reasoning (Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Gong, 2018). Based on relationship marketing (Vivek et al., 2012), SD logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), CBE is believed to promote relational outcomes such as spreading positive WOM communication, brand loyalty, and retention through the creation of alongside customer "value" (Verhoef et al., 2010). In general, consumers are seen as active parties in exchange relationships who dedicate related emotional, physical, and cognitive resources to jointly create value (Higgins and Scholer, 2009). Previous studies on CBE focused on specific brands except for the researchers Sprott et al. (2009) whose research focuses on a set of brands that reflect the consumer's self-concept. Hollebeek et al. (2014) study adopts a holistic perspective of a brand and incorporates the utilitarian, hedonic, and symbolic aspects that consumers recognize from the brand. Moreover, most of the studies on CBE operationalize the construct as multidimensional capturing the cognitive, affective and activation dimensions.

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Value Congruity, One of the most influential definitions of "value" in the social science discipline refers to "value as a criterion" and defines personal values as "an enduring belief that a certain way of behavior or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or opposite way of behavior." or the opposite end state." "Value" is the motivation behind most consumer purchases (product/brand) because human values guide individuals in such a way that they ultimately choose the object (brand) that satisfies their value (Allen et al., 2002; Lages and Fernandes, 2005). Value offers management a meaningful route to reach customers because consumers' cognitive product choice decisions depend on value fit (Brangule-Vlagsma et al., 2002). Value-fitness acts as a powerful human motivation in development and maintenance relationship (Zhang and Bloemer, 2008). This narrative places the role of congruence of values be at the center of the brand building strategy.

Self Identification, Self-identification is when an individual feels different compared to others in the same environment. based entirely on extraordinary relationships among people, advanced self-concept. According to Kim et al. (2001), consumer brand awareness is obtained by an individual when he acquires brand expertise through repeated brand experiences. Repeated brand associations by consumers lead to diligent expectations with respect to individual brands. Repeated use of brands allows customers to deal with brands as they deal with themselves. In order to build and cultivate brand identification among consumers, brand symbols and messages are mandatory for buyers to choose the chosen brand to express themselves. In such cases, knowledge of a particular brand can facilitate the advancement of consumer identification (Lamet al., 2010; Strizhakova et al., 2008). There are several potential antecedents that might impact WOM. however, we limit the potential antecedents to just a few due to the character of our empirical observations (a survey among real customers). To do so, we first examined the literature and found that brand familiarity (Beck and

Pr€ugl, 2018) and self-identification have high relevance for WOM (Vizca_ıno and Velasco, 2019). To study approximately relevant managerial considerations, we conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with 5 advertising managers from three e-commerce organizations in the experience-sharing, travel, and restaurant industries. Managers are responsible for their respective company brands (an average of five years) and have the following positions: brand manager, head of communications and head of marketing. We asked them to discuss the factors that play an important role in the development of a strong WOM. Based on this interview as well as the literature on WOM (Catal_an et al., 2019), the two most important factors that emerged were brand familiarity and self-identification

Hyphoteses Development Relationships between CBE and self-identification with value congruity as a intervening variable. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) state that the idea of identification is based on the individual's role in brand self-expression. When a brand matches consumer perceptions, consumers who use the brand may find the brand identification attractive because it allows them to maintain a more absolute and true sense of self. In contrast, consumer value is an important and fundamental link in the relationship between consumers and brands (De Chernatony and McDonald, 2003) and therefore may also have a significant impact on customer activity. According to Belk (1988), when consumers communicate an intention to buy a brand's product, they are closer to realizing their own ideals and values. According to social identity theory, while individuals are in a system of finding out for themselves in a social environment, they can be classified as self-organized to help clients evaluate their pre-determined personal specializations (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). For example, consumers identify with the company's personality and their own values; thus, consumer self-brand value conformity is more likely to lead to stronger identification (Tu_skej et al., 2013). The results of previous studies have supported the relationship between the two dimensions of CBE as cognitive processing, affection and self-identification except activation (Anitha Acharya, 2020). This study can also consider looking at some of the mediating variables as "Value Congruity", namely making activation have a positive relationship with self-identification. Value Congruence refers to compatibility with regard to consumers' personal values and their perceptions of the brand (Lee and Jeong, 2014; Zhang and Bloemer, 2011). In accordance with previous literature, for a brand to be attractive, it must reflect the values that are important to customers (Graffigna and Gambetti, 2015). Value congruence also results in increased customer brand satisfaction (Edwards and Cable, 2009; Lee and Jeong, 2014). According to Dhir (1987), human perception is a biased technique because consumers are more susceptible to method information that is completely based on their previous beliefs and values. Consequently, when consumers establish cognitive capacity by focusing on a brand (Hollebeek, 2011), they are more likely to relate to a focused brand. Furthermore, self-identification is also developed when consumers develop an attachment to the focused brand. Research shows that engaged consumers are more likely to develop strong beliefs, strengthen their affections and engage in WOM activities with key brands. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Cognitive processing has a positive relationship with self-identification.

H2. Affection has a positive relationship with self-identification.

H3. Value Congruity mediates relationship between Activation and self-identification.

Relationships between self-identification and WOM, Previous studies on brand loyalty have considered self-identification as an antecedent to WOM. Researchers Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann (2013) proposed that high consumer brand identification results in positive WOM. When consumers identify brand awareness as their self-identification and incorporate brand character into their formed self-identity and self-definition, they pass on their individual self-definition to their friends and family members. Therefore, when consumers identify themselves with a particular brand, they form an emotional connection with that brand by automatically expressing favoritism to their actions there by showing that strong brand attachment encourages consumers to make repeat purchases. (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013). When a higher self-identity expression for a brand

is formed, consumers show a stronger intention to buy the brand's products, and thus consumers become loyal to the brand and spread positive WOM to others (Wang et al., 2016). In addition, consumers are more likely to support brands they trust (Gremler et al., 2001), reducing the risk of giving incorrect recommendations. By recommending brands that make consumers feel emotionally attached, they can make a statement about themselves and strengthen their sense of identity (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed :

H4. Self-identification has a positive relationship with WOM

RESEARCH METHOD

Using an online survey, data was collected from a sample of young Indonesian consumers who shopped online. We chose this context because (1) there is fierce competition in this sector, and most companies are looking for ways to attract and retain young consumers as they tend to turn to competitors if the service is not good. Young consumers consult their friends before they do any shopping; (2) the e-commerce market in Indonesia is expected to grow to Rp 530 T by 2022 from Rp 289 as of 2020. This growth was due to the increase in smartphone and internet penetration, which almost reached 89% of Indonesia's population. Previous research has also proven that as consumer choice evolves in a highly competitive sector, understanding WOM communication is critical to the success of the e-commerce market (Jurisic and Azevedo, 2011). Consequently, in such an industry, it is worth investigating the antecedents of WOM communication. Previous researchers have suggested that data collected through online tools not only maximizes response rates but also produces results equivalent to data collected in pen and paper surveys (Deutskens et al., 2006). To qualify, the first filter question asked the respondents whether they have done any online shopping in the last six months. Respondents were asked to choose only the most used brand, if they used more than one brand. The brand name of the selected e-commerce service provider is then automatically filled in for other brand-related questions in the survey. Respondents were not offered any incentive. This study using questionnaire and measured using a Likert Scale. The Likert Scale is a scale designed to examine how strongly a subject agrees on a question (Sekaran and Bougie., 2017). Respondents are asked to give their agreement of a statement from 1 until 5, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree". From the Likert measurement scale, ordinal data will be obtained.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristic

| | n | % |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 82 | 36% |
| Female | 145 | 64% |
| Age | | |
| 18 - 23 Tahun | 111 | 49% |
| 24 - 29 Tahun | 98 | 43% |
| 30 - 35 Tahun | 10 | 4% |
| >35 Tahun | 8 | 4% |
| Education | | |
| SMA/K | 57 | 27% |
| Diploma | 23 | 10% |
| S1 | 117 | 61% |
| S2 | 2 | 1% |
| S3 | 1 | 1% |
| Duration of using a brand | | |
| <1 year | 35 | 18% |
| 1 - 2 years | 104 | 51% |
| 3 - 5 years | 33 | 17% |
| >5 years | 28 | 14% |

| Time spent on the E-Commerce Platform (per day) | | |
|---|----|-----|
| <15 minutes | 45 | 24% |
| 15 - 30 minutes | 96 | 46% |
| 30 - 60 minutes | 39 | 20% |
| >60 minutes | 20 | 10% |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In measuring CBE, the researcher adopted Hollebeek et al.'s (2014) three dimensions (cognitive processing, affection and activation) to capture the cognitive, affective and activation aspects related to focal consumer-brand exchanges. All CBE items were adapted from Hollebeek et al. (2014). Cognitive processing was measured using three items, affection had four items and activation consisted of three items. Value congruity was measured using three item and was adopted Islam et al. (2017), Lee and Jeong (2014) and Vivek et al. (2014) were measured by using four items that have previously shown decent reliability in a service context. Self-identification was measured using three items and was adopted from Jones and Kim (2011). WOM was measured using three items and was adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006). The measurement items and latent variables used in the present study are provided in Table 2.

The Cronbach's alpha scores and Corrected item Total Correlation for each item are shown in Table 2. The Cronbach's alpha scores ranged between 0.821 and 0.869, (Konting et al) indicating that values are "strongly acceptable". And corrected item total correlation scores ranged between 0,664 and 0,953 which mean indicated that values is valid. Because the minimum of r value $> 0,361$ from 30 respondents with 5% level of significance. adequate convergence (2010). All SFLs were above the cut-off of 0.50 which suggested adequate item reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha

| | Standarized Loading | Cronbach's Alpha |
|--|---------------------|------------------|
| Cognitive Processing | | |
| Using [brand] gets me to think about [brand] | .916 | .866 |
| I think about [brand] a lot when I'm using it | .933 | |
| Using [brand] stimulates my interest to learn more about [brand] | .761 | |
| Affection | | |
| I feel very positive when I use [brand] | .821 | .821 |
| Using [brand] makes me happy | .769 | |
| I feel good when I use [brand] | .710 | |
| I'm proud to use [brand] | .759 | |
| Activation | | |
| I spend a lot of time using [brand], compared to other [category] brands | .664 | .866 |
| Whenever I'm using [category], I usually use [brand] | .864 | |
| [Brand] is one of the brands I usually use when I use [category] | .878 | |
| Value congruity | | |
| I have a clear understanding of the core values of this brand | .853 | .864 |
| I really support the intent of the core values of this brand | .882 | |
| I have a great deal of agreement about what this brand's core values represent | .953 | |
| This brand is relevant to my values and needs | .920 | |
| Self-identification | | |
| This brand reflects who I am | .858 | .869 |
| I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people | .902 | |

| | |
|---|-------------|
| I think this brand could help me become the type of person I want to be | .903 |
| WOM | .869 |
| I have recommended this brand to lots of people | .858 |
| I "talk up" this brand to my friends | .902 |
| I try to spread the good-word about this brand | .903 |

Based on Table 3 obtained from results of the Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness of Fit Test obtained a chi-square value of 117.515 with a significance level of .000. The test results show the probability value significant value is $0.00 < 0.05$ then H_0 is accepted. This matter indicates that there is no significance difference between the models with data so that the regression model in this study is feasible and capable to predict the value of the value observations.

Table 3. Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness of Fit

| Chi-Square | Df | Sig |
|------------|----|------|
| 117.515 | 48 | .000 |

The results of hypothesis testing in the table 4 show that the significance value of the variable H1. cognitive to self-identification is 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05 this shows that H1 cognitive has an influence on self-identification, and H2. Affection to self-identification is 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05 this shows that H2 Affection has an influence on self-identification, and H3. Value Congruity mediates relationship between Activation and self-identification is 0.020 which is smaller than 0.05 this shows that H3 activation mediates value congruity has an influence on self-identification, and H4. Self-identification to WOM is 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05 this shows that H4 Self-identification to WOM.

Table 4. Structural Model Result

| Hypothesis Relationship | β | SE | t-value | sig | results |
|--|---------|------|---------|------|-----------|
| H1. Cognitive ---> Self Identification | .382 | .079 | 4.862 | .000 | Supported |
| H2. Affection ---> Self Identification | .542 | .061 | 8.891 | .000 | Supported |
| H3. Activation, Value Congruity ---> Self Identification | .299 | .128 | .2338 | .020 | Supported |
| H4. Self Identification ---> WOM | .391 | .052 | 7.518 | .000 | Supported |

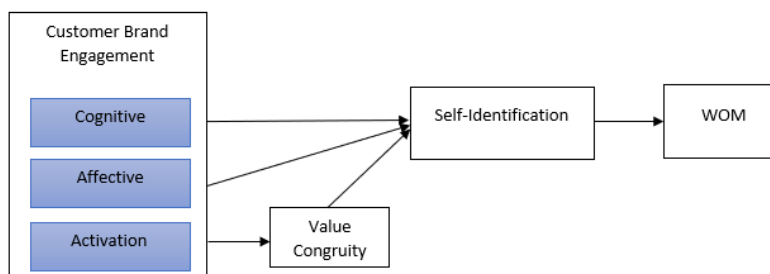


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

CONCLUSION

In line with the contributions stated in the introduction, the framework advances insights into CBE and SD logic, which, while recognized for significant theoretical concordance, remain largely

disparate in the literature (Hollebeek et al., 2019). WOM is becoming an important topic in service brand decision-making boardrooms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Markovic et al., 2018; Litvin et al., 2018; Liang et al., 2018; Kaatz et al., 2019). Consequently, this study seeks to examine the antecedents of WOM. Research findings reveal that in the context of online shopping, self-identification affects WOM. In a previous study, two dimensions (cognitive and affective processing) of CBE were found to have a positive influence on self-identification in the context of online shopping. However, the CBE activation dimension did not have a significant relationship with self-identification.

In this study, value congruity added creates a positive relationship between activation and self-identification. And the results have a positive relationship with self-identification. The positive effect of the three dimensions of CBE on self-identification is in line with previous research (Spratt et al., 2009; Leckie et al., 2016). This finding confirms that social exchange theory can be applied to the CBE domain (Leckie et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2019). Customer engagement behavior increases because familiar brands are not only more diagnostic and accessible to consumers, but are also perceived as honest, trustworthy and safe in consumers' minds (Vizca_ino and Velasco, 2019). The findings of this study also show that customers who identify more strongly with the company not only buy the product but also spread positive WOM. This finding is in line with previous studies which reported that self-identification is influenced by customer perceptions of both companies and outreach agents (Ahearne et al., 2005; Villarroel Ordenes et al., 2017; Beckers et al., 2019).

It is also important to note that this study provides evidence to suggest that the results of self-identification on customer behavior are above and beyond the influence of product evaluation. The main limitation of this study relates to generalizability. The context tested here is online shopping. Future researchers could explore the relationship between CBE, self-identification and WOM relationships across different categories of services and goods, as well as across firms within the same category. This study investigates the impact of brand familiarity, CBE and self-identification on WOM behavior. Future research could identify and test other antecedents of WOM communication. For example, Harrison-Walker (2001) suggested that WOM may be more strongly associated with value than service quality. The model was tested in the context of the e-service sector; Future research may investigate in different contexts. have a significant relationship with self-identification. In this study, value congruity added creates a positive relationship between activation and self-identification. And the results have a positive relationship with self-identification.

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